

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The Annals of Iowa

Volume 1868 | Number 3 (1868)

pps. 243-246

Editorial Remarks

ISSN 0003-4827

Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.

Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 6(3) (Jul. 1868): 243-246

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](https://iowaresearchonline.org/)

State Register and *Iowa Evening Statesman*, newspapers published at Des Moines.

Approved April 7, 1868.

STATE OF IOWA,
OFFICE OF SECRETARY OF STATE, }
DES MOINES, April 11, 1868. }

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of the original roll now on file in this office.

ED WRIGHT, *Sec. of State.*

EDITORIAL REMARKS.

CORRESPONDENTS — A CHAPTER ON HISTORY.

We desire more correspondents for *THE ANNALS*. Its publication as a part of the work of the State Historical Society, one of the means of accomplishing its objects, is of the utmost importance; and to gather and preserve within its pages the history of the State, past and present, is a work in which many can join.

There is in every community some person cognizant of the facts of its early settlement, or of important transactions or interesting particulars respecting it, of remote or recent date; which, with a little time, care and labor bestowed, would arrange and put in shape for preservation, and which may prove of great value and interest, enhancing as the date of their occurrence grows more and more remote.

Many people, perhaps most people, are apt to undervalue the historical knowledge which they carry in their memories, or the relics of the past which they have in their possession; and hence the one remains untold and the other unknown; the one passing from the knowledge of men with the passing away of the possessor; the other perishing from sight for want of care, with the valueless articles of the household. The Cabinet Rooms of the Historical Society furnish a place of secure deposit, and protection from injury, for the latter, and its archives, or the pages of *THE ANNALS*, for the former.

But we desire to speak more particularly respecting the collection of the history of the State, by securing the recollections of those cognizant of its early settlement, or of prominent events or characters connected with it; or of interests which have influenced its prosperity, or the features of its primitive condition, before it was marred by the hand of civilization. And in these regards there is a wide field and a variety of departments upon which information is sought, and which is now within the knowledge of many in various parts of the State, but by whom it seems to be very reluctantly given up. Among the topics upon which information is sought, is that of the Indian tribes. "Lo! the poor Indian!" in another sense than that conveyed by the poet, is ere long to be exclaimed of him. Verily, "the day of their deliverance draweth nigh." So near at hand does it seem, that only a brief time and they will be studied as a people of the past, and investigated with reference to the causes of their rapid extinction.

There are men within the State who have in early times lived much among or upon the borders of the Indian tribes, learned their language, their habits, and their characteristics to a very great extent, and have become otherwise richly intelligent regarding them; whom we would be glad to persuade "to make of record" their knowledge, and with this view earnestly invite contributions. We know the difficulties in the way of connected histories; or treatise arising partly from the desultory manner in which all knowledge of them is picked up, partly from their natural reticence concerning themselves, partly from the traditional character, and hence want of veritableness of all their knowledge of themselves. Yet facts, though of a desultory character, are important, and we solicit them; descriptive sketches of their habits, manners, or customs; or disquisitions upon their language, traditions, or religion; anything, whether a simple statement of a fact or facts, or a carefully prepared essay, will receive attention and preservation, and will place not us simply, but the readers of *THE ANNALS*—the future reader of the history of the early West—and the future investigator of passed-away peoples, under gratitude.

But, dropping the savage, we invite contributions from persons cognizant of facts, of times which are not traditional, and a people who are not barbarians. We solicit old settlers to put their remembrances on paper, and let it go into the archives of the Society, or into the pages of *THE ANNALS*; a matter of *fact* to the public, an element of the history of the State, garnered for such future use as the *then* may give it significance.

And this leads to the remark that the minor transactions and seemingly unimportant events of the passing hour are often stores of great wealth to the historian who writes a couple of generations or more after the time of their occurrence; becoming, through their relations to subsequent events, or in consequence of their bearing upon the development of public interests, or their influence upon communities or great characters, of the highest significance. Little appreciated at the time, they are valued only when some great truth or magnificent result attracts attention to the cause, and gives interest to whatever has been concerned in producing it, or has had a bearing, however remotely, upon it. The factious little company, who hid the Charter of their Colony for security in the hollow trunk of the old oak, is an illustration in point. They dreamed not of its import. The fact of the temporary security of the precious parchment was the only burden of their minds. Yet it has come down through many generations, and grown to be familiar as "household words" to the millions of a great nation. Historians incorporate it in their ponderous volumes; and philosophers trace backward to it the spirit of resistance to tyranny which characterized their posterity of several generations remove.

The fanaticism of a backwoods neighborhood, which resulted in the torture and hanging of "witches" and "wizards," is a chapter of New England history never omitted by the student; although the great events—great in the minds of the little colony at the time,—its wars, its political contests, its legislative discussions, its gubernatorial changes, its treatment from the mother country, its conflicts with Indians and French—may be passed lightly over. There is a clue to certain qualities of character of the Puritan settler of New England, brought out by this "Salem Witchcraft" affair, which is the compensation for wading

through its shocking details of the accusation, the trial, and the execution, gives interest to the statements, and sustains the perusal.

In reading Hume, or Macaulay, or Bancroft, or others of the most valuable histories, the evidences are abundant of the peculiar and novel sources from which they drew the material for their great works. Especially does that prince of historians, Macaulay, display a rareness of supply equalled by none who had gone before, and out of which was wrought his incomparable history. Not alone from official statistics and documents, Parliamentary proceedings and State papers, but throughout all the by-ways of England he went foraging for little facts. Not alone the great libraries, public and private, contributed to his stores; but garrets and secluded places of old mansions were ransacked for old papers, old manuscripts, old private letters of important personages, old books, ancient ballads, doggerel verse, street poetry, private diaries, tracts, bulletins, old sermons, plays, criticisms, satires, lampoons, old newspapers published a century and a half before his time, controversial discussions of the old pamphleteers—*et omnia genus*. Opening his work at random, our eye falls upon the following marginal references to the authority of the matter of a single page: "Russell's Letter to Nottingham," "London Gazette, May 23d, 1692," "Letter from the Fleet," "Burchette, Burnette, Narcessus," "Luttrell's Diary," "Mémoires de Berwick," "Ballad on the Battle, one of the best specimens of English street poetry," "Old ballad," "*Advice to a Painter*."

It is from sources like these which we have indicated, this literary *debris* of the age of which he wrote, that this master has drawn the material for his remarkable work, which sketches the events of a section of English history with wonderful precision, and spreads before the reader an accurate and comprehensive picture of the age of which he writes, photographing characters and places of past centuries as if from personal knowledge. We recollect to have read, at the time of the appearance of the first instalment of the work, the statement made by one of his reviewers, that fourteen years had been spent by the author in collecting the material which had been worked into the two volumes then published. But Macaulay gathered his stores before the day of Historical Societies in his country, or of any other concerted means of collecting and preserving the true material of history. How simplified would have been his work, if at Oxford, or London, or elsewhere, had been a depot into which for the previous fifty years had been poured these treasures of the past; and how much richer would have been the stores, when gathered and culled by hundreds of appreciative minds instead of one; and how much greater would have been the work accomplished when drawing material from these accumulated sources. No wonder, when fourteen years were necessary to gather the facts of the first two volumes that death should have overtaken him before the completion of the great work which contemplated eight, and that one-half of the great life-labor which he had laid out for himself remains unfinished.

We have referred to these instances as illustrations, how small a portion of the real material for the history of a people is to be found in official and recorded transactions; and how much the minor events and unnoticed influences of the current hour have to do with its points of greatest interest. To gather, arrange,

and preserve these passing facts, especially the passing away history of the early days of the State, is the work which the Historical Society has undertaken, which the Legislature has aided, and to which all are invited to contribute.

EDITOR.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

HISTORY OF JOHNSON COUNTY.

Captain Irish will complete the History of Johnson County in the next number ; a compact history, beginning with the first and ending with the last number of the year. We shall be disappointed if a very large number of persons in the county do not call for the purchase of this volume, so soon as the fact of this history comes to be generally known. It alone is worth many times the price of the volume of *THE ANNALS* containing it, to any citizen who takes an interest in the county and allows that interest to carry his inquiries above the question of its adaptability for the raising of corn or swine.

The Captain has been an extensive participator in the transactions of which he writes ; has been a keen observer, and possesses a memory of wonderful retentiveness ; has been at great pains withal in the collection of his material ; writes graphically and elegantly, and, with the assurance of "one having authority," recounts the stories of the olden time. Defects there may be—no doubt are yet our old settlers almost unanimously join in pronouncing it correct in all essential points ; and, while they would, they think, here and there modify a date or a statement, grant that it is superior in truthfulness, fairness and *completeness*, to what (in their judgment) could be produced by any other living man.

The Captain promises—having in this number passed through the more dry details and statistics—to give us more lively reading in the next number ; and those who know his peculiar raciness of style and wealth of anecdote, will know what expectations to form, based upon this promise.

In anticipation of a large demand for this volume, by the people of this county, now and hereafter, we have arranged that sufficient copies to supply the demand shall be ready upon call.

MOUNDS.

HON. ELIPHALET PRICE does not appear in this number, with a continuation of his interesting paper on the "ORIGIN, ANTIQUITY AND OBJECT OF THE MOUNDS OF THE MISSISSIPPI," but promises to resume the subject in the October number. We will give his excuse in his own words. He says :—"It will be impossible for me to send you a continuation of the Mound subject for the July number. I have been away from home some ; have been very busy some ; and lazy and indolent some ; but I will, I think, without doubt, be on hand in the October number."

The opening one of these papers indicates thorough research and much thought ; bears evidence of superiority, in every respect, to most of the writings upon this conjectural topic, and is written in a style that places it among the very best productions from the pen of the accomplished author.

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.